

# From the Aisles of the K&B Show

by Dave Holbrook

What's new from the movers and shakers in the K&B industry? Not a whole lot. On a footsore walk of the vast 2001 Kitchen and Bath Industry Show in Orlando, I kept a lookout for new stuff and apparent trends. The show offered lots of sizzle but little steak. To an extent, it seemed as if the manufacturers hauled out their showiest, highest-end items in an attempt to outdo one another, all but forgetting their bread-and-butter middle market. How many \$8,700 range hoods do you think you'll install this year? One kitchen and bath remodeler commented that, in more than one instance, he was informed that the items on display weren't even available to his market for lack of a local distributor. Others grumbled that there was nothing really new, and that they wouldn't come back next year.

Cabinetmakers were conspicuous by their absence; among approximately 650 exhibitors, only 35 were cabinet companies. And, basically, if you've seen a few new cabinets recently, you've seen them all.

As for trends, the good news is, if you bought in the last five years, there's no rush to upgrade. But if you went looking for novelty, the bad news is that the show was haunted by a strong element of been there, done that. This is probably a good thing; it suggests that the current trends in contemporary design and materials are performing well. Against such a familiar backdrop, a number of products still stood out.

## Cabinets and Countertops

The Smove, from Salice America (see list of manufacturers at end of article), is a nifty little piston-like shock absorber that eliminates cabinet door and drawer slams (see Figure 1) — a noise you probably don't register until

it goes missing — which makes this a compelling gadget. The device installs simply in a 10mm (3/8-inch) hole or with an adapter bracket.

*Stainless steel* has gone mainstream — definitely an outgrowth of the high-end commercial-grade appliance trend. Stainless countertops, cabinet facings,

and decorative hardware, as well as appliances, showed up in most kitchen displays. Because of its neutral, reflective coloring, stainless steel is promoted as a “natural” material that complements and accents stone, wood, ceramic, and solid surfacing.

Danver responded to designers'



SALICE

**Figure 1.** Find something else to slam. The Smove device gives cabinet doors and drawers a soft landing by cushioning the last inch of travel.



DANVER

**Figure 2.** Stainless-steel cabinets and countertops match commercial-look appliances. A wood interior softens the application, while a steel finish is hard to beat.



ROY TECH

**Figure 3.** This drill-powered mechanical lifter allows lateral shifting for accurate wall cabinet installation. Adjustable feet and a built-in bubble vial eliminate the need to hold a level on the cabinet while fastening.



AVONITE



DUPONT



**Figure 4.** Glass-like solid surfacing offers some unique design opportunities, including backlighting effects (above left). While solid surfacing strives to emulate solid stone by using a high mineral content (left), the real thing is available in ready-made countertop sections from Global Stone, allegedly at the same price point (above).

demands for a stainless-steel cabinet, fabricating a sleek cladding to cover the plywood carcass (Figure 2). The company also makes an all-stainless drawer box with integral undermount slides.

**Turn it up.** All that armor weighs a cabinet down. But a cordless drill/driver is all you need to raise up to 500 pounds of wall cabinet into place. Roy Tech's Installer's Helper cabinet jack has a lifting range of 28 inches; set up on a rolling table or base cabinet, it should handle nearly all wall cabinet heights. Traveling rail supports allow shifts to

the left or right for exact placement on the wall (Figure 3). A built-in bubble vial and adjustable legs eliminate the need for a separate level, leaving hands free for screw installation. The unit retails for under \$800 and drew a lot of interest at the show, according to the exhibitor.

**Solid surfacing and stone.** An interesting new option in solid surfacing is Sky Glass by Avonite. Snowflake-like particles suspended in a translucent matrix give this material a deep, 3-D quality that, when backlit, glows like frosted, colored glass (Figure 4). Colors

include antique "bottle" green, cobalt blue, clear frosted, and sky blue.

DuPont introduced Zodiaq, its 93% quartz, solid-surface material, in stony hues as well as a few colors nature never intended. Apparently, the real thing's been giving them a run for the money. In that context, Global Stone trotted out its own prefabricated kitchen countertops and vanity tops in a dozen standard and exotic shades of solid granite. A 96x25x3/4-inch countertop with a 1 1/2-inch-thick bullnose edge on three sides sells for \$370 to \$475 (depending on stone color), allegedly bringing the installed price on a par with solid surfacing. The savings over custom granite fabrication can be significant, up to 60%. Note that you'll be paying F.O.B. St. Petersburg, Fla. And, if you're confronting a sink cutout or trimming the length, you'll need tools: The company offers a tool package for \$1,539, and an instructional video for a minimal fee.

**Edging in.** Add-on decorative countertop edging eliminates much work in the shop or on site. Kuehn Bevel's open-ended line of ready-made or custom high-pressure-laminate and solid-surface options includes all major laminate brands and selected solid surfaces (Figure 5). There is no minimum-order requirement.

**Dropping in.** Mix-and-match countertop materials serve various functions in a working kitchen. Adwood's Granitefield stone countertop inserts can be used as a cutting board, hotplate, or pastry board and install in a self-rimming stainless-steel ring.



KUEHN BEVEL



ADWOOD

**Figure 5.** Decorative countertop edging can match, contrast with, or combine with solid surfacing and high-pressure-laminate surfaces (left). Adhesive application is simple in the shop or field. A stone insert converts a section of countertop into a handy hotplate or a dedicated work station (right).

## Cool Packages

Refrigerators, with their height and bulk, can be difficult to position in the kitchen lineup. Equator throws designers a playful curve with its cylindrical Avant Garde box, suitable for free-standing island placement or kitchens with a \$3,000 refrigerator budget and space to burn (Figure 6, page 3).

**Back to the future.** Elmira Stove Works's nouveau-nostalgic Northstar Retro Refrigerator could have jumped off the set of *I Love Lucy*. This company

**Figure 6.** You can keep a square meal cold in a round box (right), or time-trip with a fifties fridge (middle). On the cutting edge, a Web-friendly refrigerator puts milk, eggs, and the world in one handy location (far right). Check out the home page.



EQUATOR



ELMIRA STOVE WORKS



LG ELECTRONICS

**Figure 7.** Send in your drawer measurements for custom acrylic organizers. Clear, removable, partitioned units maximize drawer space.



CUSTOM INSERTS



ROCK SOLID

**Figure 8.** Switchplate and outlet covers in solid-surface material can be ordered to match most major brands. Standard and custom configurations are available.

specializes in wrapping up-to-date technology in yesteryear's packaging. In the right setting, retro looks cool, even contemporary. The prices range (by color) between \$2,695 and \$2,895. Face-panel kits are also available to back-date other refrigerators, as well as the dishwasher, microwave, and wall oven.

You might expect to see a lot of Internet-ready appliances in 2001, but only newcomer LG Electronics was actively promoting its Web-friendly Internet DIOS. This 26-cubic-foot refrigerator features an in-door 15.1-inch TFT-LCD screen and a LAN port for Web surfing, TV, music, video-phone, and e-mail — all for a cool \$10,000.

### Finishing Touches

Custom Inserts's clear acrylic drawer organizers introduce order to tangled utensils, flatware, and that other vaguely identified stuff in kitchen drawers, start-

ing at \$60 to \$70 (Figure 7).

**Custom covers.** Although "bisque" is the latest stock shade of pale for electrical switchplate and outlet covers, it's still no match for the wide world of whites, let alone any of those speckly shades. Rock Solid's solid-surface covers can be ordered, standard or custom, in Avonite, Corian, Fountainhead, Gibraltar, PioniteSolidSurface, and Surell (Figure 8).

**Nice knobs.** You've probably struggled with cabinet knob selection before. Plain and simple knobs and pulls in stainless steel, from Arthur Harris Chicago, offer high-quality and low-profile compatibility with many cabinet styles. The prices are reasonable, ranging from \$5 for a brushed-finish knob to \$10 for an 8-inch bar pull.

Informal, one-of-a-kind knobs, fashioned from polished semiprecious stones such as tiger jasper, quartz, and turquoise come by their good looks naturally



ARTHUR HARRIS



NATURAL KNOBS

**Figure 9.** Decorative hardware is one of the toughest items to select. Stainless-steel knobs may be all it takes to get with the contemporary metal decor trend (left). On the other hand, stone is, by nature, virtually timeless (right).



STYLE SOLUTIONS

**Figure 10.** Metal finishes are finding their way into many kitchen designs. Even close up, metal-coated urethane millwork looks like solid brass, bronze, copper, or nickel.



PEDAL VALVES

**Figure 11.** A foot-operable kitchen faucet control keeps greasy hands off the levers.

(Figure 9). Natural Knobs's stone pulls could be just the ticket to lessen the stainless chill of a steel facing or complement a stone countertop. The knobs cost about \$14.50 each, depending on the stone selected.

**Make mine metal.** Metal-finish urethane crown molding makes a striking accent in the kitchen. Style Solutions displayed several profiles featuring Metallon, a cold-sprayed, 95% real metal coating in nickel, brass, bronze, or copper (Figure 10). Options include a no-miter installation system and satin, antique, hand-rubbed, and green

patina or bright copper finishes.

**Not necessarily new,** but notable, was a foot-operable kitchen faucet control (Figure 11). The PedalWorks valve allows the user to run the water only as needed while keeping both hands on the food prep or cleanup. Great for someone with arthritic hands, foot operation also keeps the faucet handles from getting coated with chicken fat and cookie dough. The device is designed to retrofit to existing faucet hookups, has a lock-on feature for continuous flow, and provides an override for normal hand control.

## Sources of Supply

### Adwood

800/397-1860  
www.adwood.com

### Arthur Harris Chicago

312/666-6832  
www.ahchicago.com

### Avonite

800/428-6648  
www.avonite.com

### Custom Inserts

877/428-7866  
www.custominserts.com

### Danver

203/269-2300  
www.danver.com

### DuPont

800/426-7426  
www.zodiaq.com

### Elmira Stove Works

800/295-8498  
www.elmirastoveworks.com

### Equator Appliances

800/935-1955  
www.equatorappliances.com

### Global Stone

727/521-0094  
www.globalstone.com

### Kuehn Bevel

800/862-3835  
www.kuehnbevel.com

### LG Electronics

800/243-0000  
www.lgeus.com

### Natural Knobs

941/749-1962  
www.naturalknobs.com

### Pedal Valves

800/431-3668  
www.pedalvalve.com

### Rock Solid

608/249-6988  
www.rcksolid.com

### RoyTech

800/783-7701

### Salice America

800/222-9652  
www.info.salice@saliceamerica.com

### Style Solutions

800/446-3040  
www.stylesolutionsinc.com